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AUTHOR Benoit, Pamela J.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

A study examined the nature of audience perceptions of television characters' relationships in "Hill Street Blues" and displayed how relational differences in fictional couples are communicated. Using a relational dimensions instrument, the relationships between Frank Furillo and Fay Furillo and between Frank and Joyce Davenport were categorized as independent, traditional, or separate. Frank and Joyce were independent, while Frank and Fay were separate. Display of conversational synchrony, use of implicit topic changes, and occurrence of private language and teasing episodes were communicative cues that indicated Frank and Joyce have a more integrated relationship than Frank and Fay. Further, Frank and Joyce were portrayed as equals while Frank and Fay's relationship was complementary. Communicative cues also indicated that Frank and Joyce were work-centered while Fay was self-centered. With Joyce, when dealing with conflict, Frank chose an integrative strategy 50% of the time, and a distributive strategy 36% of the time. The pattern was similar with Fay. Joyce chose a distributive strategy in 91% of their arguments, and Fay chose a distributive strategy 65% of the time and an integrative strategy 35% of the time. After viewing videotaped scenes, subjects answered several open- and closed-ended questions. Answers indicated that the audience's perceptions of these relationships match those achieved through content analysis of the show. (SRT)

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DISPLAYING THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP DIMENSIONS IN HILL STREET BLUES

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Pamela J. Benoit
Michael J. Porter
William L. Benoit

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Department of Communication
University of Missouri
Columbia, Missouri 65211

CS 505 472

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between mass media and interpersonal communication has often been neglected. While it is acknowledged that media are pervasive and relationships are important, scholars rarely cross interdisciplinary boundaries to systematically examine the nature of the intersection between media and interpersonal. It has been argued that relationships occur within a mediated culture (Gumpert & Cathcart, 1986) and that media present a view of reality (including the portrayal of relationships) that reflects or creates a sense of the nature of persons and their relationships (Berg, 1972; Novak, 1977; Real, 1977). This paper addresses the latter issue by examining the nature of audience perceptions of television characters' relationships and by displaying how relational differences in fictional couples in television narratives are communicated.

The literature on interpersonal dimensions of relationships in the media is limited. Turow (1974) examined advising and ordering interaction between male and female characters in daytime serials and prime-time dramas, concluding that characters portrayed traditional sex roles in both time periods. The selection of characters, the choice of occupations, and the plot lines minimized the opportunity for women to display superior knowledge over men. Lemon (1978) reported a similar study of male and female roles in situation comedies and crime drama programs, finding that men dominated women in both types of programming. Tedesco's analysis of male and female television characters in prime time programming over a four year period also revealed a pattern whereby "it [is] difficult for men to view women as equals, for women to view themselves as equal to men, and for both

sexes not to view the male role as necessarily the more active, powerful, and independent role" (1974, pp. 122-3). Barbatsis (1979) examined the type of messages communicated by male and female characters in popular prime-time, daytime, and Saturday morning programs. Characters who sent the most messages were young, white, and male. Their messages were consistently dominant in nature while the female receivers were often placed in more submissive positions. This brief literature review suggests that attention has been given to the portrayal of male and female characters and that this generates conclusions regarding the portrayal of sex typed roles and the display of dominance/submission.

While this literature has been instrumental in forging a connection between mass media and interpersonal issues, this particular study will be unique in three significant ways. First, the prior literature focuses almost exclusively on individual level analyses rather than dealing with relationship or transaction dimensions (Rogers, Courtright & Millar, 1980). To redirect the research toward the nature of the relationship between couples, it is important to examine how a given relationship, for example, negotiates the dominance/submission issue rather than how male or female characters are portrayed independent of their partners. Second, this paper examines audience perceptions of relationships. Finally, since this paper focuses on audiences' global impressions, an attempt will be made to assess multiple dimensions of interpersonal relationships (including dominance/submission).

Given the objectives of this study, we decided to focus on relationships within a single television series. This choice allowed us to gather more comprehensive information on particular relationships

while controlling for differences in perceptions that could be accounted for by different formats or story lines. We chose to juxtapose the relationship of Frank Furillo and Joyce Davenport with the relationship of Frank Furillo and Fay Furillo of Hill Street Blues. Frank Furillo is the captain of the Hill Street precinct and interacts with both his current wife, Joyce Davenport, and his former wife, Fay Furillo. These two relationships represent a rich opportunity to assess audience perceptions of the nature of relationships. Within the same program, and with the same male partner, audiences view both a developing relationship (Frank and Joyce) and a relationship being renegotiated following a divorce (Frank and Fay).

Critical analyses of the Hill Street Blues program have offered passing insights to these relationships. Frank Furillo has been called "the updated version of an old American hero, the self-remade man" (Gitlin, 1983, p. 312). Unlike the pre 1980 heroes, Furillo is viewed as "a new image of benign authority cultivated in the middle class. . . As an image of sensitive male authority in contemporary life, Travanti's Furillo stands as an alternative to Al Pacino's predatory, power-hungry, paranoid godfather (1983, pp. 310-11). Prior to the 1985-86 season, Fay's visits to the Hill were a frequent subplot without closure (see Deming, 1985, for a discussion of closure in narratives). Her interactions are described as "literal intrusions of domestic life on the job. Also, her ineptitude in managing her own life and her refusals to subordinate her needs and those of Frank Junior to the exigencies of Frank's police work cast her in the role of perpetual innocent" (Deming, 1985, p. 16). Frank and Fay's interactions concentrate on resolving Fay's personal crises and stand in

sharp contrast to the interactions between Frank and Joyce. Joyce is portrayed as an equal, a successful professional, independent, assertive, and tough. The fact that she is married to Frank Furillo never seems to interfere with her job as a public defender. Deming notes that Joyce "often articulates the point of view of Furillo's antagonists. Her criticism of his behavior comes closer to the target and cuts deeper into his vulnerability than does Fay's. When Joyce accuses him of `having a corner on the morality market' or `playing by his own rules,' he offers a serious defense" (1985, p. 16). At the other extreme, the audience also sees the couple engaged in romantic play, in bed, at the conclusion of a hard day at work.

These analyses suggest that critics perceive differences in the quality of the two relationships (Frank and Joyce compared to Frank and Fay), but do not provide evidence that audiences share these perceptions. Nor was their intent to provide a systematic analysis of the relationship components of the program.

METHODOLOGY

This study offers a unique contribution to our understanding of relationships portrayed on television by answering the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of audience perceptions of the relationship of Frank Furillo and Joyce Davenport and of the relationship between Frank Furillo and Fay Furillo?

2. How are the differences between Frank Furillo and Joyce Davenport and between Frank Furillo and Fay Furillo communicated?

3. Do audiences perceive the same differences as the coders in the relationships between Frank Furillo and Joyce Davenport and between Frank Furillo and Fay Furillo?

To answer the first research question, we needed an instrument that would assess multiple dimensions of a relationship and that would be capable of detecting differences in types of relationships. In the interpersonal literature, Fitzpatrick and her colleagues (1977, 1982, 1983, 1984) developed a relational typology based on over 1,000 married couples' responses to a self report instrument assessing eight dimensions of relational life (sharing, ideology of traditionalism, temporal regularity, assertiveness, autonomy, ideology of uncertainty, undifferentiated space, and conflict avoidance). The authors argued that by describing relationships by important dimensions "we can understand the communication that occurs in those relationships as well as the relational outcomes of a couples' communicative exchanges" (Fitzpatrick & Indvik, 1982, p. 211).

A linear analysis consistently produced a distinction between three types of individuals. Type 1 are the independents who are committed to an ideology of uncertainty and change, exhibit less temporal regularity in daily routines, express opposition to traditional values regarding marriage, self disclose a good deal, are autonomous, willing to engage in conflict, and less socially restrained by rules protecting the other's feelings. The second type is the traditional. These individuals believe in conventional sex roles and values, describe their relationships as highly interdependent rather than autonomous, exhibit much sharing and companionship, use the same space, and are willing to experience conflict about important issues. Type 3 are the Separates who lack either a commitment to or opposition to traditional values. This type reports greater conflict avoidance while also exhibiting a militant frankness (e.g. telling it

like it is), displays little interdependence or sharing among partners, uses more differentiated space, feels socially restrained, and has been described as "emotionally divorced." The typology was based on husband and wife's individual perspectives and were compared to determine a relationship type. Pure types occurred when partners agreed on their relational definitions which accounted for 60 percent of the couples classified. Mixed types occurred when relational definitions were dissimilar for the individuals (e.g. Separate/Traditional).

Minor revisions in the wording of the instrument were made to convert the self report format to one that assessed audience perceptions of the relationships they had observed in watching the Hill Street Blues series. Eighty-eight subjects, with previous exposure to the program, completed the Relational Dimensions Instrument (RDI) for both the Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay relationships. Since the original RDI is lengthy and the subjects were asked to complete the instrument for both relationships, we used the abbreviated form reported in Sillars, Pike, Jones & Redmon (1983) that reproduces the two subscales measuring sharing and the ideology of traditionalism. Borrowing from these procedures, the means on each subscale were compared to the means for each relationship type reported in Fitzpatrick's (1977) normative study of married couples. These procedures produced data that determined the type of relationship (Independent, Traditional, Separate) that audience's perceive between Frank and Joyce and between Frank and Fay.

The second research question assesses how differences in relationships are conveyed. What cues exist that allow viewers to differentiate these relationships? Are behavioral differences portrayed on

television that reflect different types of relationships? To answer this question, we must start from behavior found in actual couples.

Fitzpatrick also undertook research that investigated differences in the communication patterns of the three types. We began to answer the second research question by examining two variables that distinguish between relationship types (relational control, conflict strategies). Preconstructed coding schemes were applied to 27 scenes excerpted from eight episodes in which Frank and Joyce (17 scenes) or Frank and Fay (10 scenes) were primary characters. The scheme (Rogers, Courtright, & Millar, 1980) for coding relational control (i.e. dominance/submission) categorized each utterance for form and response mode to determine classification into one of three categories: one up, one down, or one across messages. One up messages assert a relational definition (↑). A one down message accepts or requests a relational definition from the partner (↓). A one across message avoids acceptance or assertion of control (→). Since relational control is jointly determined, analyses are based on transaction codes that pair two contiguous utterances. These pairings produce three types of exchanges: complementary, symmetrical, or transitory. Complementary patterns occur when a one up message is preceded or followed by a one down message (↑↓). These patterns pair opposite types of control messages. Symmetrical exchanges match the control message of the partner and take three forms. When a one up message is preceded or followed by the same (↑↑), the exchange is competitive symmetry. When a one down message is preceded or followed by another, it is called submissive symmetry (↓↓). When a one across message is matched, it is labeled neutralized symmetry (→→). Transitory ex-

changes occur when a one across message is used in combination with a one up or one down message from a partner (↑→ , →↓). Intercoder reliability ratings for these data were .92.

A second system for assessing conflict strategies was applied to the scenes because it has also been shown to distinguish among the types of relationships. Sillars, Pike, Jones, & Redmon (1983) argued that there are three primary strategies for dealing with conflict. Avoidance acts are utterances that minimize the direct discussion of conflicts by denial, topic changes, indirect acts. Distributive acts are verbally competitive acts and involve threats, blaming, shifting responsibility, hostile joking. Integrative acts are supportive or information seeking acts like showing positive regard, asking questions, soliciting criticisms. Intercoder reliability ratings for detecting the occurrence of conflict were .91 and 1.0 for classifying the type of conflict strategy.

In addition, a qualitative analysis comparing and contrasting the scenes generated additional dimensions for examination. Analytic induction was used to identify recurrent patterns that were theoretically grounded. These patterns focused on differences in the visual display of relationships (e.g. physical positioning through blocking, touching) and conversational indicators (e.g. conversational synchrony, private language, teasing) of the nature of the relationship.

To summarize, the second research question was answered using several variables. Based on the preconstructed coding schemes for relational control and conflict strategies and the qualitative analysis of the scenes, we develop an argument that the Frank-Joyce relationship is distinct from the Frank-Fay relationship on several dimensions. We support this argument by drawing upon multiple commu-

nicative cues displayed in the visual media that are indicators of these differences.

The last research question attempts to validate this argument. We were interested in whether audiences perceive these differences based on the same cues. Therefore, twenty-four undergraduate students were exposed to the same 27 scenes between Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay. Based on this viewing, they were asked to write an impression of one of the two relationships: "Write an impression of Frank and Joyce's [or Frank and Fay's] relationship. Include in your description what kind of relationship they have, whether it is satisfying and why, whether the relationship is close, stable, equal, etc. . . Be as specific as possible in indicating what leads you to draw these conclusions from the tape you have seen." These impressions were coded using thematic categories to detect recurrent dimensions. Subjects were also asked to respond to a series of closed questions (semantic differentials) addressing the differences in relational dimensions detected in the prior research question. The mean responses to these items were calculated. The data were then compared to the arguments we had developed. When the themes and the averages on the closed items were isomorphic with the analysis, it was taken as confirmation of the analysis. Disconfirming results were treated as an opportunity to refine the analysis.

RESULTS

The first research question addressed audience perceptions of the Frank-Joyce relationship and the Frank-Fay dyad by gathering responses to the RDI. Means from the subscales of the RDI were computed to

categorize each relationship as Independent, Traditional, or Separate. Using procedures similar to those reported in Sillars, Pike, Jones, & Redmon (1983), these scores were compared to those obtained in Fitzpatrick's (1977) large sample survey of married couples. If the means were high on both subscales (sharing, traditionalism) the relationship was classified as traditional. If the score was higher on the sharing scale but lower on traditionalism the relationship was classified as independent. Finally, if the mean was low on sharing the relationship was typed as separate. This procedure determined that viewers perceive Frank and Joyce's relationship as independent while the relationship between Frank and Fay is seen as separate (See Table 1 for a comparison of the means).

Since the items reflect relationship rather than individual variables, it is not surprising that Frank is perceived differently when his partner changes. This supports the claim that the nature of a relationship is jointly determined and that Frank and Joyce have established a different pattern than that exhibited by Frank and Fay. To classify each of these relationships into a type allows inferences to be drawn from the prior research detailing their characteristics. As is noted earlier, independents (Frank and Joyce) are non-traditional, autonomous, experience conflict, are less socially restrained, and embrace uncertainty and change. Separates (Frank and Fay) are frank in their exchanges, display little interdependence, and are described as "emotionally divorced." Given that the audience did not see Frank and Fay's relationship prior to the divorce, it is not surprising that they would be typed as separates. The typology provides a useful framework for understanding audience perceptions of these two relationships. This analysis also provides support for the

argument that audiences do make distinctions between television couples and that these distinctions can be detected by instruments designed to assess relational dimensions of actual (vs. fictive) dyads.

The second research question was designed to answer how differences in relationships are conveyed to an audience. Multiple coding schemes were applied to scenes between Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay to ascertain differences in the way these relationships were portrayed. These results led us to develop an argument detailing the types of differences in these relationships and the communicative behaviors that served as cues for these differences. The argument makes four claims that are consistent with the characteristics of the types detected by audiences:

1. Frank and Joyce have a relationship that is more integrated than the relationship between Frank and Fay.

2. Frank and Joyce are equals while Frank-Fay are complementary.

3. Frank and Joyce are work centered while Fay is self centered with attendant consequences for the interactions between herself and Frank.

4. Frank and Joyce exhibit a different style of conflict than Frank and Fay.

In the next section, these claims are developed by illustrating multiple communicative cues which create the perception of differences in the relationships of Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay.

The first claim posits that Frank and Joyce have a more integrated relationship than Frank and Fay. Interpersonal theorists (Knapp, 1978; Altman & Taylor, 1973) argue that as relationships develop through stages, a more advanced level of development occurs

when interactants are mutually orchestrating their interactions. The relationship has progressed to the point where it is comfortable for the participants, involves much shared knowledge, and reflects a collaborative sense of involvement. The scenes between Frank and Joyce display this stage and contrast with the relationship between Frank and Fay, which is still in the process of renegotiation. The first cue that Frank and Joyce have a more integrated relationship is that they exhibit more conversational synchrony than do Frank and Fay. Synchrony is a discourse variable that assesses the degree to which interactants mirror the form of their partners talk. Altman and Taylor (1973) have described synchrony as an indicator of a more developed relationship (e.g., Jaffee & Feldstein, 1970; Feldstein, 1972; Capella, 1979, 1980; Capella & Planalp, 1981). In prior research, it has been operationalized by comparing the length of turns at talk. In the scenes between Frank and Fay, Frank's average turn was 8.8 words while Fay's average turn was over twice as long (19.7 words). In contrast, in scenes between Frank and Joyce, Frank's average turn was 9.0 words while Joyce took a turn with 9.7 words. Frank and Joyce more closely mirror the length of their partner's turn. In an analysis of the differences between each pair of contiguous utterances, the average difference between Frank and Fay's turn was 17.3 words while the average difference between Frank and Joyce's turn was considerably smaller at 8.1 words.

To illustrate this argument, consider two excerpts from the scenes that were analyzed. In the first example, Frank and Joyce closely parallel each other's turn lengths:

		Number of Words
F:	Um was the crush reciprocated?	5
J:	You're jealous.	2
F:	Yeah.	1
J:	He was married.	3
F:	Is he still?	3
J:	What?	1
F:	Married.	1
J:	I didn't ask. It didn't come up.	7
F:	Just wish you hadn't sprung this on me like this.	10

Neither dominate the conversation and contiguous turns appear to be matched to prior utterances. In the second example, a distinct pattern emerges in which Fay holds the floor for extended turns while Frank does not reciprocate:

		Number of Words
Fa:	Ah, to Joyce Davenport? Oh, what a stupid think to ask. Of course it's Joyce. It's just that, well, I am so surprised, Frank. I'm happy for you, really I am. I'm, I know that you're going to be very happy and that Joyce is.	45
Fr:	Thank you.	2
Fa:	Of course you're timing's really damn lousy, I'll have to say that.	12
Fr:	How do you mean?	4
Fa:	Well, well you know it's just that, that I'm pregnant, and I'm just really trying to get it all together and that I'm finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and and you turn it into another train. Frank, how could you do this to me? Is this what you meant when you said that no matter what I did you'd be there for me? You call this help?	73

This kind of interaction does not create the impression of a carefully orchestrated conversation; rather, it highlights the disjuncture between them by displaying a lack of integration in the structure of their discourse.

A second cue that signals integration in a relationship is the use of implicit understandings. An integrated relationship relies on more shared knowledge and requires less explicit marking of the relevance of utterances. In other words, a close relationship need not say everything on the surface of the talk because the very nature of

their relationship makes it unnecessary. This is particularly evident at topic shifts in conversations. In discourse with a stranger or a less developed relationship, shared knowledge is limited and the speaker must carefully indicate the relevance of their talk to a prior topic or mark the utterance explicitly as a change in topic. In discourse with a partner where there is much shared knowledge, the relevance of utterances may be inferred without being explicitly stated and there is a greater tolerance for unmarked topic changes. Planalp & Tracy (1980) developed a coding scheme that distinguished between implicit and explicit topic changes in conversations. When applied to the scenes from Hill Street Blues, it was determined that topic shifts between Frank and Joyce were implicit significantly ($X^2 < .01$) more often than explicit. (See Table 2). For example, in this scene Frank introduces the new topic "being police chief" without explicitly connecting it to the prior sequence of turns or marking it explicitly as a topic shift:

F: Victim may still turn up.
J: I want this investigated, Furillo, or a misconduct complaint against the officers next.
F: Uhm, it seems I'm not going to be police chief.

The topic shifts between Frank and Fay are the reverse, that is they are more explicit than implicit. Since the amount of interaction and shared knowledge is decreasing in their relationship, they must display the relevance of their talk to their partner or mark the talk as being off the prior topic. Frank chooses to do the latter in the following scene:

Fa: I know, but ooo I just don't want him to call her mommy.
Fr: He shouldn't and he won't.
Fa: Good.

Fr: Ah, also, I think maybe the three of us should get together and ah, lay down some guidelines.

His utterance is not on the topic of "what Joyce will be called by Frank Junior" but is marked by "also", a conjunctive commonly used to designate that a topic shift is eminent. So, the topic change is accomplished by explicitly noting a new topic.

The last cue that supports the argument that Frank and Joyce have a more integrated relationship focuses on their use of private language and teasing episodes. Hopper, Knapp, & Scott (1980) have argued that such language serve as indicators that a relationship is intensifying for they connote special meanings built on shared understandings. Joyce refers to Frank as "pizza man" but Fay uses no such nickname with Frank. Frank and Joyce engage in several teasing episodes that convey the personal level of their relationship. For example, in discussing Phil Esterhaus' untimely death during sexual intercourse, Frank interjects:

F: Wanna make love?
J: Could cost your life.
F: I'll risk it.

They collaboratively develop a sequence of playful utterances that both understand are to be interpreted beyond a literal level. There are only isolated attempts at teasing between Frank and Fay. Furthermore, when they do occur, the teasing is misunderstood. For example, when Fay reports that Frank Junior has found her in bed with Judge Grogin and that the judge is avoiding her, Frank initiates a teasing episode that he finds necessary to mark as such because Fay does not understand his intent:

Fr: Tell you what, I'll have a talk with Frank Junior and you take care of his honor.
Fa: How? I can't even get him on the phone.
Fr: Well, can your insurance rates handle another court appearance? (Fay looks confused, an awkward pause occurs.) Just kidding. (Phone rings)

In a more integrated relationship, interactants are more likely to recognize the force of utterances and to minimize the occurrence of misunderstandings.

The display of conversational synchrony, the use of implicit rather than explicit topic changes, and the occurrence of private language and mutually acknowledged teasing episodes are communicative cues that lead to the impression that Frank and Joyce have a more integrated relationship than Frank and Fay. These cues provide multiple indicators that point to the same interpretation of the nature of the relationships.

The next claim is that Frank and Joyce are portrayed as equals while Frank and Fay's relationship is seen as complementary. This is consistent with the interpersonal literature which suggests that the type of relationship (Independent, Separate, or Traditional) has consequences for the dimension of relational control. Research that compared types by control messages in married couples reported that independents (such as Frank and Joyce) use significantly more competitive exchanges than other types while separates (such as Frank and Fay) use significantly more complementary exchanges. If this prediction is also reflected in the portrayal of television characters relationships, then Frank and Joyce should engage in more competitive symmetry while Frank and Fay's messages should be classified as complementary. Based on the relational control coding system, 52% of the message exchanges between Frank and Joyce are competitive symmetry,

instances in which both parties attempt to shape the dialogue and are equally dominant. In contrast, 46% of the message exchanges between Frank and Fay are complementary in nature, instances in which one party is dominant and the other is submissive (see Table 3). Examples of this contrast make the point even clearer. In a typical exchange between Frank and Joyce, they are placed in antagonistic roles and each defends their behavior:

J: Even faster we're running after short order crooks
F: Counselor, there were not PD's available. We had a rash of counselors around her and half of your office was unavailable.
J: Then we should have delayed the lineup. What are you doing with him?
F: Holding him back downstairs.
J: May I ask why when 5 eyewitnesses failed to identify him.
F: We ran a name check. And he's been in the puzzle house twice for evaluation and he has a prior for lascivious carriage.
J: Lascivious carriage. I'm shocked.
F: Plus we received a tip on him.
J: Ah, the mysterious phone caller. Maybe he'll get back to us on who bombed the Hindenberg.

This serves as a contrast to the typical behavior between Frank and Fay. Fay is usually having a personal crisis and seeks Frank's advice and support. Since she solicits a relational definition from him, her utterances are frequently coded as one down or submissive. In the following example, Fay relates her difficulties to Frank, asking implicitly for his direction and support, and Frank responds by offering the positive encouragement she seeks:

Fr: What can I do for you?
Fa: Get a divorce and marry me. Frank, I wanted so much to have natural childbirth. But you know Paul Grogin doesn't want to be seen with me, so I don't have a delivery partner and, well, I'm really beginning to think the whole thing is a horrible mistake.
Fr: Oh, but you've come this far.

Fa: No, really Frank. I'm afraid that something terrible is going to happen. I just don't want to be alone right now.

These types of transactions provide compelling evidence for the claim that the relationship between Frank and Joyce is that of equals while the relationship between Frank and Fay is distinct and complementary.

The occurrence of comforting remarks was examined, and Joyce offered comforting remarks to Frank in 29 percent of the scenes, while he did not offer such remarks to her in any of the scenes. In the relationship between Frank and Fay, the trend is reversed. In 70 percent of the scenes he either offers specific comforting remarks, or in general, he shows his support and understanding of her situation throughout the scene. Yet Fay never offers any comforting remarks to Frank in any of their scenes.

Finally, the dominance/submission aspect of the couple's relationship can be analyzed by the physical positioning of the characters. An analysis of the scenes reveals that Frank and Joyce are shown primarily in a standing position, as equals (71%). The other position for Frank and Joyce was either sitting or laying in bed. The visual analysis of the scenes between Frank and Fay is more complicated. Frank is usually sitting at this desk (50%), normally recognized as a position of authority. Fay begins her discussions in a standing position but usually will sit down during the course of the interaction. Fay never invades Frank's space behind the desk while Joyce is occasionally seen entering into this space. In some scenes, we even see Frank standing over Fay or sitting on the desk above Fay in order to offer his comforting remarks. So, the visual display of dominance is apparent in the relationship between Frank and Fay while Frank and Joyce are seen as equals even in their physical positioning.

Particular scenes reinforce this claim. In one episode, we see Frank and Joyce in the kitchen. This traditionally female environment is equally shared by the characters. Frank even gets his own cup of coffee. In the bedroom scenes between them, we see Joyce taking a more dominant role than the traditional wife. For example, in one episode, she unties Frank's robe in the prelude to sexual activity. In another, we see them in bed together and Joyce initiates such activity from the dominant position, on top of him.

In summary, the relational control codes, the use of comforting remarks, and the means by which interactants are visually portrayed all provide support for the claim that Frank and Joyce are portrayed as equals while Frank and Fay are viewed as having a complementary relationship.

The third claim posits that Frank and Joyce are work centered while Fay is self centered. By work centered, we mean that Frank and Joyce take their careers seriously, that intrusions of a personal nature are limited at work and that intrusions concerning work were common at home. Evidence for this claim was obtained by coding the number of utterances about personal and work issues by setting. At the office three-fourths (76%) of the talk between Frank and Joyce was work related, while personal issues occupied less time (24%). While at home, personal issues dominated their conversation (63%), while work related issues were less dominant (37%). All except one of Frank and Fay's interactions took place at the office, yet every utterance was of a personal nature (even when Fay was working in the capacity of a volunteer at the Hill Street precinct).

This difference is also exhibited in the treatment of Fay's

interactions with Frank. Because her conversations focus on personal issues even in the work environment, she is portrayed as an interruption to Frank's work. She often begins the interaction with an acknowledgment of her intrusion (e.g. "Frank, I know you're busy. I'll make this fast and to the point."). Likewise, Frank often terminates their conversations by allowing his work to intrude (e.g. " Fay, I really have a lot of work to do here. I'm sure you'll think of something," "I'm sorry. I gotta go."). Even though the texture of the Hill Street Blues series involves the intersection of numerous story lines, including scenes which appear to begin in the middle of an interaction, or which end before the encounter seems completed, Joyce is never perceived as an interruption to Frank's work. This difference can be accounted for by the fact that Joyce shares a work centered attitude and her line of work demands that she interact with the captain of the precinct. The dramatic structure of the series dictates that scenes often begin in the middle of conversations, (such as with several scenes between Frank and Joyce), or that Joyce leaves the scene because her own work is pulling her away. We also see her minimizing the amount of personal talk that is done on the job. Such an attitude is bound to influence a second cue, the amount of touching that occurs in the work environment. As Frank and Joyce share a work orientation at the office, we would expect that little physical touching would occur. The visual analysis indicates that Frank and Joyce never touched in the office or in public. They understand that their personal relationship is separate from their work. While at the office, Joyce treats Frank as the police Captain and not her husband and this is reciprocated by Frank. However, when we see them in their home, some form of touching always occurred, and can be

classified as either passionate (50%), friendly (30%), or comforting (20%).

Because the work environment is treated so differently in the Frank-Fay relationship, physical contact is also treated differently. In over half (60%) of their interactions, some type of touching takes place (equally distributed between comforting or friendly gestures). Unlike Frank and Joyce, who do not have any physical contact while at work, Frank and Fay treat the work environment differently. Comforting or friendly physical contact is acceptable between these two in the workplace, primarily because the interactions between Frank and Fay focus on Fay's personal crises which demands some form of comforting and caring response from her former husband.

Therefore, audiences are exposed to a layering of communicative cues which support the argument that Frank and Joyce are work centered while Fay is self centered. In summary, Frank and Joyce limit their talk about personal issues while they are at work but their work intrudes at home. Fay treats the precinct station as an environment in which her own personal issues can be introduced and discussed in length. Given Frank's orientation toward work, it is not surprising that their interactions are frequently interrupted by his work. In contrast, we do not see his interactions with Joyce as interruptions for she shares his orientation to work in the precinct environment. As a consequence, there is little touching between them in the workplace while the nature of the interactions with Fay promote touching. Fay is capable of redefining the nature of the situation, albeit temporarily, by focusing on her own difficulties rather than work.

The last claim of relational differences concerns the style of

conflict used by the two couples. Prior research (Sillars, Pike, Jones & Redmon, 1983) found that the types of relationships (Independent, Traditional, Separate) were related to preferences among conflict strategies. While the types did not differ in their use of distributive or integrative strategies for handling conflict, they did differ on their use of avoidance acts. Independents used significantly more acts of avoidance and were more likely to use indirect strategies (e.g. level shifting) than separates who also avoided conflict but did so directly (e.g. denial, noncontinuity). Additional evidence also suggested that when distinctions are made between satisfied and unsatisfied couples, satisfied separates attempt to minimize conflict episodes while independents who reported satisfaction were more likely to express their feelings and exhibit more integrative acts. When the same coding scheme for conflict strategies was applied to the episodes between Frank and Joyce and Frank and Fay, the results did not parallel prior research for they indicated that both couples rarely avoided conflict. These may be explained by the nature of television narratives, that highlight conflict for its interest value. The Hill Street Blues series is particularly intense and fast paced and it is not surprising that it would focus on the overt display of conflict rather than its avoidance.

Specifically, in interacting with Joyce, Frank chose an integrative strategy in 50% of the episodes involving conflict and a distributive strategy in 36% of these encounters. Joyce chose a distributive strategy in 91% of their arguments. In interacting with Fay, Frank's pattern is quite similar. He chose an integrative strategy in 56% of the cases and a distributive strategy in 39% of the encounters. Fay chose a distributive strategy in 65% of the cases and an integra-

tive strategy in 35% of the cases. This analysis and a careful review of these episodes suggest that Frank is more comfortable eliciting information and attempting to logically resolve a problem. While both Joyce and Fay use distributive strategies must frequently, they have a different character. First, Joyce uses this type of strategy throughout her interactions with Frank. Even when he uses the integrative, information seeking strategies, she continues to confront him. In contrast, Fay often begins a conflict episode by using a distributive strategy that blames Frank but can be eventually influenced by his attempts to redirect their interaction toward a more integrative style. Second, Joyce's confrontive remarks concern substantive issues and are likely to criticize the actions of Frank in his role as precinct captain. Fay's critical remarks are motivated by emotional frustration and are directed at Frank in his role as father and ex-husband. To illustrate this analysis, consider the differences in the following examples:

J: What's going on?
F: We're putting Turner back in the lineup for Bates.
J: Oh, come on.
F: We concede prior prejudicial effect.
J: Do you concede Turner's being framed? A show up id followed by a failed lineup and a new lineup. This is vigilante atmosphere, Captain. Sorry, but you're building your little castle on sand. Mr. Turner's going to have a very strong defense.

Fa: I want to know right now, Frank, what's he gonna call her?
Fr: Call who?
Fa: Now, he can call her Joyce, he can call her Ms. Davenport, he can call her Auntie Joyce, he can call her Wonder Woman for all I care, but I will not let my son call her Mom, now is that understood, I will not.
Fr: Ah, can we start from square one? Can you tell me what happened?
Fa: Frank Junior wants to move in with his new mother, as he chooses to call her. I caught him sneaking out of the

apartment this morning with two suitcases and all his video game cassettes.
Fr: I see. Did you have some kind of argument?
Fa: No. It just came out of no where.
Fr: Maybe he feels that if you're entitled to another child, he's entitled to another mother.
Fa: Think that's it? I mean really, do you think maybe he's just jealous?
Fr: Well, that could be part of it. But Fay, you-- you're just going to have to let him find a place for Joyce inside himself, you know, without changing his love for you in anyway.
Fa: I know, Frank.
Fr: She's his stepmother now.
Fa: I know, but ooo I just don't want him to call her mommy.
Fr: He shouldn't and he won't.
Fa: Good.

In the first example, Joyce expresses her opinion with "militant frankness" and uses power strategies to attempt to gain compliance from Frank. Fitzpatrick (1984) reports research that suggests that independents demand compliance from their partners. This example also provides evidence of Frank's preference for integrative strategies. He responds to the competitive challenges with explanations of his actions in the role of precinct captain. Yet, these kind of remarks do not temper her criticisms for she continues to respond in a critical manner. She is his antagonist and is equal to the challenge. In the second example, the differences in the styles of conflict become apparent. While Frank is still using an integrative style with Fay, he is soliciting information and offering possible accounts for Frank Junior's behavior. Fay begins the interaction in an excited state and implicitly blames Frank for this problem because he has changed the situation by marrying Joyce. As the interaction develops and Frank treats the episode as a problem that can be reconciled, Fay begins to reflect this way of dealing with the situation as well. She considers his explanation and appears comforted by it, and the interaction closes when the issue has been resolved. Consistent with this analy-

sis, an examination of the episodes between Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay also revealed that 75% of the conflict episodes between Frank-Joyce concern work while all of the interactions expressing disagreement between Frank-Fay concern personal issues (often Frank Junior). This contributes to a difference in the perceptions of their relationships. Even though Frank and Joyce experience intense conflicts at work, it does not appear to adversely affect their relationship. But Frank-Fay's conflicts are about personal issues that have a more profound and negative effect on impressions of their relationship.

In summary, Joyce is committed to a tough and overtly critical style in dealing with Frank, conveying that she is not likely to be persuaded by mere words or adopt his style for dealing with the situation. Fay is distraught and likely to blame Frank but he can control their interactions by redirecting the emotional outbursts into problem solving sessions where Fay can be gently guided into making decisions affecting her personal life.

The third research question asked if the audience would draw the same conclusions regarding the nature of the differences in the relationships of Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay after viewing the same scenes we used to code the portrayal of the relationships. Very few studies designed to analyze the content of television programming have considered audiences' perceptions of the same phenomenon being examined. By analyzing the audience's perceptions of the Frank-Joyce and Frank-Fay relationships, we are able to validate the critical analysis of the study.

After viewing the videotaped scenes used in the earlier analysis, subjects were asked to write a free response of their reactions as

well as answer several closed-ended questions. The discussion of these responses are organized to parallel the claims advanced in the second research question to determine whether the audience data provides confirming evidence for the arguments we advanced.

The first claim indicated that the relationship between Frank and Joyce is more integrated than the relationship between Frank and Fay. In our analysis we found multiple cues leading to these assessments: Frank and Joyce used more conversational synchrony, used more implicit topic changes in their conversations, and used more private language and teasing than did Frank and Fay.

Several of the subjects noted that Frank and Joyce have "good communication with each other" or that "they are very comfortable to express freely their ideas and opinions." Others talked about the level of "openness" and "honesty" in the relationship. In describing Frank-Fay, several noted that their relationship was neither "stable nor satisfying." They mentioned that they thought the relationship was "frustrating" for both Frank and Fay. These comments suggest that the audience shares a global impression that Frank and Joyce's relationship is well integrated, but did not highlight the specific communicative cues we detected.

Using a five point scale (high = 1 to low = 5), the subjects ranked Frank higher on his commitment to Joyce (1.2) than his commitment to Fay (2.5). Joyce was perceived as having a slightly higher commitment to Frank (1.6) than did Fay (2.0). These results conform to our analysis of the relationships. Joyce and Frank are perceived as having a higher commitment to each other than do Frank and Fay. The subjects were also asked to describe the ease of communication between the two couples (easy = 1, difficult = 5). The subjects

indicated that Frank and Joyce have an easier communication pattern (1.8) than do Frank and Fay (2.3). Again, this data confirms our analysis of the couples' relationships, with Frank and Joyce having a more synchronized communication pattern than do Frank and Fay, although both of these scores lean towards the "easy" side of the scale.

The second claim proposed that Frank and Joyce are portrayed as equals while Frank and Fay's relationship is seen as complementary. In our analysis we found that Frank and Joyce engaged in more competitive symmetry in their exchanges, where both parties shaped the dialogue and were equally dominant, while Frank and Fay's messages were classified as complementary, where Frank was more dominant and Fay was submissive. This was also displayed in differences in the use of comforting remarks and their physical positioning.

The subjects perceived this level of competitive symmetry in the Frank-Joyce relationship either viewing them as equals, or, sometimes, seeing Joyce to be slightly dominant.

> Their communication is good. I don't believe either of them has control over the other. Both are able to say how they feel.

> Neither one is a dominating force in an interaction. The relationship for Frank is a working, best-friend-at-the-office relationship. He seems to confide in her more than anyone else.

> They [Frank and Joyce] really stick to their guns on what they believe in. I think Joyce has a little more power in the relationship. This is one reason why Frank is so attracted to her. Joyce is totally opposite from his ex-wife. Frank needs someone who isn't so dependent on him and doesn't come running to him after every little disappointment.

The relationship between Frank and Fay is described in almost opposite terms. Frank is perceived as the dominant partner in the

relationship with Fay as the dependent partner:

> Fay depends on Frank. Frank is seen as the dominant one in this relationship. Fay uses his shoulder to cry on.
>
> Fay seems to come to Frank for various problems and Frank somehow manages to soothe her. Fay constantly imposes on Frank yet Frank manages to handle it tactfully. Frank always took out time for Fay's visits.
>
> Fay often comes to Frank for guidance, advice, and to blame him for her troubles, disregarding his.
>
> The relationship functions for Fay as a support system. Fay makes herself "seem helpless."

It is interesting that audiences also perceive that Frank provides comforting remarks for Fay, which is implicit in the above comments about the Frank-Fay relationship. Frank provides a "shoulder to cry on", as well as "guidance" and "advice." Frank is the "support system" for Fay. While our analysis also revealed that Joyce was the partner who offered the comforting remarks to Frank, and that these comforting remarks were not reciprocated by Frank to Joyce; none of the subjects' responses reflected this quality in Joyce. One possible explanation is that Joyce's comforting remarks, upon closer analysis, could be attributed to social desirability (e.g., beginning a conversation "How are you feeling"). Additionally, the tone of most of Joyce's interactions with Frank are so strong and strident that they seem to overpower her more comforting qualities.

Our analysis also looked at the physical positioning of the characters in analyzing the dominance/submission aspect of the couple's relationships. None of the subjects commented on this visual information in their written comments. They may attend more closely to the verbal patterns of communication than the non-verbal.

In the closed-ended questionnaire, the subjects were asked to

indicate the dominance in the relationship using a five-point scale (Frank is dominant = 1, to Fay [Joyce] is dominant = 5). In the Frank-Fay relationship, Frank was viewed as the more dominant individual in the relationship (1.8). In the Frank-Joyce relationship, Joyce was seen either as equal or slightly more dominant (3.5) than Frank. Again, this data confirms our analysis of the dominance/submission quality of the relationships and is also reflected in the subject's open-ended responses.

The third claim focused on Frank and Joyce as being work-centered while Fay and Frank's relationship focused on Fay's self-centered interests. The subjects' responses confirm this observation. Many of the subjects note that Frank and Joyce have separate work and personal lives.

> Their work relationship is handled very well. They seem to understand the differences between work and home.
>
> They seem to somewhat keep their personal life and professional life separate, which would be a difficult task.

The audience also report the work-centered nature of the relationship:

> The one thing that bothers me about the relationship is that they have a hard time leaving their work at home.
>
> They are able to release pressure by sharing problems and concerns about their jobs at home. However, they never talk about anything else besides their jobs. There seems to be no outside interests.

These comments indicate a desire to be shown more of these characters outside of their work environment. These subjects see work as impinging on the relationship between Frank and Joyce, primarily because they do not see them engaged in conversation with topics

beyond the scope of their work.

Several subjects compared the work-centered relationship of Frank and Joyce to the self-centered relationship of Frank and Fay.

> Their relationship is very strong, very equal, but most of their conversation, even in the bedroom, centers around their work. This is unlike Frank and Fay's relationship, where the discussions are almost always about petty things.
>
> I do think the relationship is much more satisfying to Frank than his relationship with his last wife, because since it seems that work is very important, it is good that Joyce thinks her work is important also--that way one or the other partner does not feel cheated that so much time is spent at work, and not enough time is spent with the partner.
>
> For Frank the relationship functions as a stimulating relationship. Joyce is intelligent, and also meets his needs by giving him space to do his own thing. Fay barges in and wants him to put everything aside and listen to her, whereas Joyce comes and says what she came to say and leaves him alone.

The subjects were asked to rank Frank's ability to separate work from his relationship with either Fay or Joyce, and either Fay's or Joyce's ability to separate work from their relationship with Frank (able to separate = 1, unable to separate = 5). With Fay, Frank was more able to separate his work from his relationship with her (2.0) than with Joyce (2.9). Fay and Joyce were ranked almost the same on this factor (Joyce-2.9; Fay-3.0). Frank and Joyce are rated the same (2.9) in terms of their ability to separate work from their relationship with their partner. Fay, on the other hand, whose interactions with Frank are primarily of a personal nature, also ranked almost identical to Joyce on this question. This may be due to the fact that Fay always sees Frank at his place of work.

The fourth claim concerns the style of conflict used by the two couples. The subjects perceived a great deal of conflict in both of

the relationships. Perhaps because Frank and Joyce have an equal and open relationship, they are perceived as being able to "yell and argue about 'business.'" Subjects thought that Joyce used a distributive style in handling conflict in the relationship with Frank, as the following comments reveal:

> Joyce can be rather short in her conversations.
>
> Frank needs Joyce mostly to be his counselor, even his devil's advocate at times. She drills him on every major decision he makes and he lives this because she is so intelligent and is a challenge for him, unlike Fay. Although Frank and Joyce argue, their passion for each other is clearly evident.

This last excerpt also points to the consequences of the conflicts. For Frank and Joyce, conflict does not appear to damage their relationship (e.g., perhaps because so much of it is work related). The differences in style of conflict resolution may account for why some subjects perceive Joyce as having the "upper hand" (rather than being equal) in her relationship with Frank. Part of this perception may come from the way that Frank handles all of his interactions, whether it is with Joyce, Fay, or any of the members of the Hill Street precinct. The analysis reveals that Frank uses an "integrative" strategy in his interactions with both Joyce and Fay more frequently than other types of strategies. Frank, therefore, does not appear as "combative", but instead elicits additional information and attempts to logically resolve a problem.

The subjects who analyzed Frank and Fay's relationship focused on Frank's "integrative" strategy in "calming" Fay down, who frequently needs this sort of help:

> Fay vents herself so emotionally and tends to expect him

[Frank] to solve all her problems.

He doesn't shrug Fay and her problems off but he always seems to say just the right thing or gives just the right advice to satisfy Fay and keep the meeting short.

Frank is always controlled, trying to be rational with Fay.

Finally, the subjects were also asked to describe the style of conflict used by the three characters using a semantic differential scale with three variables: (controlled/uncontrolled, rational/irrational, and satisfying to him [her]/unsatisfying to him [her]). The subjects rated Frank as being similar in control, rationality, and satisfaction across the two relationships. Substantive differences appear in the comparison of the two women. Joyce was considered more controlled in her relationship with Frank (2.0) than Fay (4.1); and more rational (1.7) than Fay (4.3). Her relationship with Frank was viewed as more satisfying to her (1.6) than was Fay's relationship with Frank was to Fay (3.4).

Notice that the audience perceives that Frank's style is fairly consistent with both women. Joyce and Fay are seen as reacting quite differently to him. Joyce is more controlled, rational, and satisfied with the outcomes of their relationship. Fay, on the other hand, appears uncontrolled, irrational, and much less satisfied in her relationship with Frank.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to our understanding of interpersonal communication and relationships as portrayed on television. Whether dramatized relationships reflect actual ones or influence them (or both), fictional couples merit our attention now more than ever in

today's media-oriented society. In the instance of Frank Furillo's relationships with Joyce Davenport and Fay Furillo on Hill Street Blues, two distinct relationships are portrayed. Close examination of these dyads--employing multiple dimensions--produces evidence of the same patterns of communication behavior documented in actual relationships. Nor are these behavioral differences opaque to ordinary viewers. Open ended and focused questions elicit perceptions which parallel our data, providing strong confirmation of our analysis.

We are not arguing that writers, producers, directors, or actors make conscious decisions to, for example, exhibit greater synchrony in Frank's relationship with Joyce than with Fay. Rather, the findings reported here are evidence of shared social knowledge about relationships and attendant communication behavior. Further evidence of such knowledge can be derived from the viewers' generally consistent reactions to the portrayed behavior: audience members possess the same implicit theories about relationship and behavior driving the characters' portrayals. The fact that we find consistent patterns across multiple dimensions of behavior demonstrates the depth and complexity of this shared social knowledge. This suggests that audiences form their impressions of relationships based both on the observed behavior of the couple and the audiences' implicit theories. The fact that perceptions of Frank on some dimensions are similar while perceptions of these two relationships diverge is an indication that relationships (and perceptions of them) are jointly developed. This means that we must study the relationship as a whole and not simply the individual members of the relationship in isolation.

This study is, of course, limited in scope. The depth of analysis and variety of methods and data sources employed here restricted

us to investigation of two relationships in a single dramatic series. Future research examining additional relationships across television genres would supplement these findings.

TABLES

Table 1. Means on the RDI Dimensions by Couple

Dimension	Frank-Fay	Frank-Joyce
Sharing	3.52	4.74
Traditional	4.61	4.46

Table 2. Topic Shifts by Couple

Type of Shift	Frank-Fay	Frank-Joyce
Implicit		
Immediate	3	3
Earlier	0	2
Environmental	0	1
Unspecified	1	4
Total	4 (36%)	10 (76%)
Explicit		
Immediate	2	1
Earlier	1	0
Environmental	4	2
Unspecified	0	0
Total	7 (64%)	3 (23%)

*Percentages refer to proportion of a couple's topic shifts.

Table 3. Type of Exchange by Couple

Type of Exchange	Frank-Fay	Frank-Joyce
Complementary	51 (46%)	37 (28%)
Symmetrical		
Competitive	25 (22%)	69 (52%)
Submissive	16 (14%)	9 (7%)
Neutralized	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
Transitory	19 (17%)	16 (12%)
Total	112	133

*Percentages refer to proportion of a couple's exchanges.

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